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Claims:

1. (Currently amended) The apparatus as claimed in claim 24, further comprising:

~~An apparatus for immobilizing an injured joint of a body comprising:~~

~~a first plate adapted for engaging a limb of the body, the first plate having a first end portion;~~

~~a second plate adapted for engaging a body part to which the limb is connected via the injured joint, the second plate having a second end portion;~~

~~a hinge for pivotably connecting the first an end portion of the first plate and the second an end portion of the second plate; and~~

~~a support mechanism extending between the first plate and the second plate, for maintaining the first plate in a fixed position relative to the second plate when the apparatus is in use.~~

2. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in ~~claim 1~~, claim 24, further comprising at least one securing mechanism attached to the first plate.

3. (Original) The apparatus as claimed in claim 2, further comprising a second securing mechanism attached to the second plate.

4. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in ~~claim 1~~, claim 24, further comprising compressible padding attached to a concave surface of the first plate.

5. (Original) The apparatus as claimed in claim 4, further comprising compressible padding attached to a concave surface of the second plate.

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Original) The apparatus as claimed in claim 2, wherein the at least one

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securing mechanism comprises at least one strap.

8. (Original) The apparatus as claimed in claim 2, wherein the at least one securing mechanism comprises a strap and a fastener.

9. (Original) The apparatus as claimed in claim 8, wherein the fastener comprises a hook and loop fastener.

10. (Currently amended) The apparatus as claimed in ~~claim 1~~, claim 24, wherein at least one of the first plate and the second plate is contoured for receiving a body part when the apparatus is in use.

11. (Currently amended) The apparatus as claimed in ~~claim 1~~, claim 24, wherein at least one of the first plate and the second plate flexes into a concave orientation when the apparatus is in use.

12. (Currently amended) The apparatus as claimed in ~~claim 1~~, claim 24, wherein the first plate is disassembles from the second plate when the apparatus is not in use.

13. - 23. (Cancelled).

24. (Currently Amended) An universal apparatus for immobilizing ~~an~~ any one of different injured joints of a body comprising:

a first plate, which is flat when the apparatus is not in use, the first plate having a first end portion;

a second plate, which is flat when the apparatus is not in use, the second plate having a second end portion;

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a hinge for pivotably connecting the first end portion of the first plate and the second end portion of the second plate,

wherein, in use for immobilizing an injured joint of a body, the first and second plates remain rigid in their lengthwise direction while in their width-wise directions the plates are molded into a semi-cylindrical or concave shape that is adapted to engage the curved portion of a body part, and

wherein apparatus components including the plate and hinge dimensions and orientation are configured so that the apparatus is a universal tool for immobilizing any one of different body parts including a shoulder, elbow, knee, wrist and hip corresponding to different types of joint injuries.

25. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 24 wherein the plates are formed of alternating rigid and flexible plate segments that provide rigidity in the lengthwise directions of the plates and flexibility in the width-wise directions of the plates.